

What is claimed is:

1. A method of tracking animal transfers with animal passports, the method comprising steps of:

creating an animal passport to represent a transfer of
5 animals from a transferor to a transferee;

assigning a unique passport identifier to each created animal passport, thereby providing a unique identification of the underlying transfer; and

repeating the creating and assigning steps for each
10 subsequent transfer of one or more of the animals, wherein the animal passport created for each subsequent transfer also records the unique passport identifier assigned to each most-recent transfer of those animals.

15 2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein each of the animal passports is signed by a transferor and transferee who are parties to each transfer, thereby certifying the transfer represented by the signed animal passport.

20 3. The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of recording the animal passports in a repository.

4. The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of using the animal passport identifiers to track locations

of the animals.

5. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the animal
passports reflect a complete lifetime of the animals and are
5 therefore usable to track transfers of the animals throughout
their lifetime.

6. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the animal
passports reflect a complete lifetime of the animals and are
10 therefore usable to track locations of the animals throughout
their lifetime.

7. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the transfers are
transfers of ownership.

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8. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the transfers are
transfers of possession.

9. The method according to Claim 1, wherein at least one of
20 the transfers is a transfer of ownership and at least one of the
transfers is a transfer of possession.

10. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the repeating and
assigning steps are also repeated for subsequent transfers of

animal products derived from the animals.

11. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the animal
passports further specify individual animal identifications of
5 the transferred animals.

12. The method according to Claim 1, wherein additional animals
may be included in one or more of the subsequent transfers, and
wherein the animal passport created for such subsequent
10 transfers also record the unique passport identifier assigned to
each most-recent transfer of those additional animals.

13. The method according to Claim 1, wherein animal passports
are created for each transfer during a lifetime of the animals
15 and further comprising the steps of:

recording each of the animal passports in a repository,
along with a specification of how many animals are represented
by each transfer, a location of the animals during a timeframe
covered by the animal passport, and an identification of one or
20 more transferors and one or more transferees who are parties to
each transfer; and

determining a country of origin for one or more selected
ones of the animals using a most-recent unique passport
identifier associated therewith to determine all locations in

which the selected ones have been located throughout their lifetime.

14. The method according to Claim 13, further comprising the
5 step of preparing a country of origin claim using the determined country of origin.

15. The method according to Claim 1, wherein animal passports
are created for each transfer during a lifetime of the animals
10 and further comprising the steps of:

recording each of the animal passports in a repository,
along with a specification of how many animals are represented
by each transfer, a location of the animals during a timeframe
covered by the animal passport, and an identification of one or
15 more transferors and one or more transferees who are parties to each transfer;

using a most-recent unique passport identifier associated
therewith to determine all locations in which one or more
selected ones of the animals have been located throughout their
20 lifetime; and

verifying a country of origin claim for the selected ones
by comparing the determined locations to one or more locations
stated in the country of origin claim.

16. A system for uniquely identifying animals transferred in groups, the system comprising:

means for associating a unique identifier with each transfer of a group of animals;

5 means for recording the unique identifiers in a repository, along with a specification of how many animals are in the group and an identification of one or more transferors and one or more transferees who are parties to the transfer; and

means for linking each subsequent transfer of any of the
10 animals to prior transfers by associating a new unique identifier with each such subsequent transfer and specifying an association between the unique identifier of the prior transfer and the new unique identifier of the subsequent transfer.

15 17. The system according to Claim 16, further comprising means for tracing transfers of a subset comprising one or more of the transferred animals by accessing the association between the unique identifier of the prior transfer and the new unique identifier of the subsequent transfer for that subset.

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18. A system for identifying groups of animals from birth to death, comprising:

means for associating a unique identifier with animals transferred from an original owner thereof;

means for associating a different unique identifier with each subsequent transfer of the animals or any subset thereof; and

means for linking, at each subsequent transfer, the
5 different unique identifier with the unique identifier associated with a most-recent transfer of the animals in that subsequent transfer.

19. The system according to Claim 18, wherein additional
10 animals may be included in one or more of the subsequent transfers, and wherein the unique identifier of the most-recent transfers of those additional animals is also linked with the different unique identifier of the subsequent transfer.

15 20. A method of tracking transfers with passports, the method comprising steps of:

creating a passport to represent a transfer of one or more entities from a transferor to a transferee;

assigning a unique passport identifier to each created
20 passport, thereby providing a unique identification of the underlying transfer; and

repeating the creating and assigning steps for each subsequent transfer of one or more of the transferred entities, wherein the passport created for each subsequent transfer also

records the unique passport identifier assigned to each most-recent transfer of those entities.